



## **Transportation Advisory Committee**

Date: January 12, 2022

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

### **Minutes.**

#### **1. Administration.**

Members in Attendance: Dan Amstutz (DPCD), Wayne Chouinard (DPW), Lenard Diggins, Ray Jones, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis (Chair), Howard Muise, Tycho Nightingale, Scott Smith, Corey Rateau (APD), Laura Swan, and Shoji Takahashi.

Members of Public in Attendance: Thad Dingman, Samantha Karustis, Petru Sofio, and Joe Solomon.

The Chair provided notice regarding Remotely Conducted Meetings, referring the members to the agenda attachment entitled "Governor Charles Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law". The Chair reviewed the meeting ground rules and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

#### **B. Approval of December 8, 2021 Meeting Notes.**

The Minutes of the December 8, 2021 meeting were approved.

#### **C. Correspondence**

- Letter from the Select Board dated December 20, 2021, titled "Reappointment: Transportation Advisory Committee", for the reappointment of Jeff Maxtutis for a 3-year term.

#### **D. Liaison for Council on Aging.**

Ray Jones will be the TAC liaison to the Council on Aging.

## **E. TAC Rules of Governance.**

Laura Swan, Howard Muise, and Scott Smith worked on revising the TAC Rules of Governance to reflect how the TAC operates presently. Wayne Chouinard and Corey Rateau expressed concern about having non-TAC volunteers serving on TAC Working Groups. They proposed adding guidelines to non-TAC members serving on TAC Working Groups.

Jeff Maxtutis and Scott Smith responded that local residents have served on Working Groups in the past, providing valuable feedback as well as community outreach. The existing Governance is silent on Working Group members being comprised of TAC members or non-TAC volunteers. Minimally, Working Group membership needs a provision to include persons affiliated with other Town Committees that might be relevant.

Scott Smith and Len Diggins inquired whether non-TAC volunteers serving on a Working Group is legally acceptable to the Town Counsel. Len Diggins and Melissa Laube suggested that guidelines be added for non-TAC Working Group membership. Laura Swan will communicate with the Town Counsel.

## **F. Hybrid Meeting Pilot Program.**

The Remote Participation Study Committee of the Town inquired with TAC to pilot a hybrid meeting format permitting simultaneous in-person and remote participation. The Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law will be lifted April 1 (unless extended), and TAC meetings will have to have an in-person component.

Len Diggins commented that the Select Board has held two meetings in a hybrid format, and the Massachusetts Legislature has not decided if it will permit online-only meetings. The hybrid format may permit TAC to continue to have an online component, and he recommended that TAC join the hybrid-meeting pilot. Participating in the hybrid-meeting pilot would permit TAC to make suggestions as to how to improve the logistics and processes for TAC's purposes.

Dan Amstutz and Laura Swan noted concerns on staffing and technology on how to run efficiently a hybrid meeting. Distractions due to technical problems could hinder TAC Meetings. Scott Smith added that TAC could participate if the Remote Participation Study Committee provides the appropriate technical support. Tycho Nightingale expressed support for hybrid meeting and added that a goal of the pilot is to consider the logistics.

Ray Jones expressed support for hybrid meetings to permit equitable access. Jeff Maxtutis observed that public participation generally has been higher online than in person. He proposed that the Executive Committee would discuss participation and move forward with further TAC discussion in future.

**2. Public Comments (for information only, not for action).**

There were no public comments.

**3. Town Issues/Activities (not already on the agenda).**

**A. Wayne Chouinard provided an update from the Department of Public Works (DPW).**

Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) are operating at (1) Quincy St and Gray St and (2) Lowell St at the Reservoir. Solar panels power the flashing-LED perimeter lights. Radar speed feedback display has been ordered for Lowell Street.

Minuteman Bikeway: DPW worked with Waze to address the problem of drivers turning onto the Bikeway from Lake St, some of which seems to result from navigation apps telling drivers to make this turn instead of at Brooks Ave. Waze now classifies the Bikeway as a “park”, which may reduce driver confusion when using Waze to navigate the area.

Chestnut Terr: temporary bollards placed for crosswalk bump outs. Bollards for the medians were not placed because of the winter season. New pedestrian signals were installed at Mystic St and Chestnut St as the older ones were not functioning properly.

Mass Ave and Appleton St: Signs and bollards were installed.

Bates Rd Left Turn: observations were not conducted during the holiday period as they might not be indicative of typical traffic patterns.

Petru Sofio observed that many people were using the RRFB at Lowell St and the Reservoir. He added that the perimeter LED sign was not in sync with the RRFB. DPW will check on its functioning in the morning.

**B. Corey Rateau provided an update from the Police Department (APD).**

APD has received complaints of speeding on Elmhurst Rd, which is a private way. Under the Town Betterment Program, ~70' of roadway was repaved recently.

APD obtained traffic speed and volume data: average speed to Brooks Ave was 15.9 mph (85<sup>th</sup> percentile: 21.9 mph); average speed to Mass Ave was 15.8 mph (85<sup>th</sup> percentile: 21.9 mph). Two percent of vehicles were traveling more than 27 mph, which is considered a very low percentage.

Peak Volume in morning (8am) average 18 automobiles; in afternoon (4pm) average 50 automobiles. Average Daily Traffic (ADT) was 218 automobiles, which is considered low for a roadway off Mass Ave.

**C. Dan Amstutz provided an update from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).**

Stratton School Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Sidewalk Project. The 25% design was submitted to MassDOT; may receive a response in April. A public meeting for the 25% design would then be scheduled after Town Meeting.

Minuteman Bikeway Planning Project. Existing conditions report is being finalized and will be shared soon. The next public meeting on waysides and trailheads will be in a few weeks.

MassTrails Grant project – Mystic River Path to Minuteman Bikeway. First public meeting is scheduled for January 26.

Shared Streets Grant. New grant was announced with applications due March 1. The grant is for capital funding, and the Town is presently considering which projects to submit for the grant.

Mass Ave/Appleton St Parking Study. In response to Wayne Chouinard, parking study results are still being analyzed and may be released in a few weeks.

**4. Vote: Lower Washington St One Way.**

Melissa Laube provided a summary of the Washington Street Working Group Memo. The Working Group is recommending two options for consideration to the abutters of the private way: (1) Two-way traffic with southbound traffic yielding; and (2) One-way traffic northbound. As it is a private way, the implementation of the recommendations is to-be paid for by the abutters. Select Board can determine what funding, if any, the Town can provide for signs on Town property.

Wayne Chouinard expressed concern for TAC making recommendations for a private way and the potential liability to the Town. Instead, he recommends that any changes be conducted through the Betterment Process: the abutters hire a traffic engineering consultant on how to address the perceived problems and repair and maintain the road surface as appropriate.

Corey Rateau added that bicycles and automobiles follow the same rules, therefore the one-way direction recommendation is problematic for access to the Bikeway. Scott Smith noted that MassDOT provides guidance and allows for contraflow bike lanes.

Melissa Laube and Wayne Chouinard suggested that TAC's Memo and comments on the Betterment Process be taken to the Town Counsel for review

on how to proceed. Wayne Chouinard will communicate with the Town Counsel and apprise TAC of the comments.

## **5. Vote: Dallin SRTS.**

Joe Solomon summarized changes requested in the Dallin Elementary School Arrival and Dismissal Pilot Plan. The recommendations were made by Judy Crocker of MassDOT's Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) in conjunction with Dallin School and neighborhood public meetings. The pilot is proposed to start in the early spring and continue to the end of the school year, a period long enough for residents' behavior to change and to see the its effects on arrival and dismissal.

Thad Dingman, Principal of Dallin School, explained that this Arrival and Dismissal Pilot Plan is for seven grades: K – 5 and Gibbs School (6<sup>th</sup> grade). The Gibbs bus stop is at the front of Dallin School on Florence Ave, where there also is two-way automobile traffic. Therefore, the front of Dallin cannot be used for K – 5 drop off, and drop off occurs ad hoc throughout the neighborhood.

To create a safer environment, the pilot includes closing Florence Ave in front of the school to thru traffic during arrival and dismissal times. The plan seeks to encourage walking by improving the walking environment while discouraging driving to school. Additionally, it aims to reduce dangerous driving behavior such as U-turns, speeding, and multipoint turns near the school and improve drivers' parking behavior.

During the pilot period, SRTS and Dallin staff will observe and evaluate the changes. Dallin School also is requesting observations and evaluation from APD. In surveys of Dallin parents and guardians over the years, arrival and dismissal has been a notable problem. Dallin will resurvey the parents and guardians during and after the pilot. In addition, midway through pilot, there will be a public meeting to seek feedback and address concerns.

Wayne Chouinard commented that the plan has been studied and vetted thoroughly. For pedestrian safety reasons, he expressed concern about temporary barriers, as they tend to-be lightweight and will not stop a moving automobile. He suggested trying different types of barriers, including heavier barriers that would require a dolly to move them into place.

Dan Amstutz provided comments on the memo. He suggested adding information about a community meeting that was held in late August, 2021, with approximately a dozen participants. Also, the memo should note that evaluation will include discussions with George St abutters on the proposed changes to the direction of George St to be one-way next to the school. Signs for no parking at Florence Field during arrival and dismissal should include times to clear any ambiguity about when parking by the field is permissible. Several TAC Members

voiced support for street parking at Florence Field as being important outside of school hours.

Using TAC funds, traffic data were obtained on Oakland Ave in October, 2021, to acquire “before” data to compare to traffic during the pilot. In response to a comment from Corey Rateau, Dan Amstutz responded that TAC could try to obtain traffic counts on Wachusett Ave as automobile traffic might travel to the Florence Ave and Park Ave traffic light.

Corey Rateau expressed several concerns: (1) traffic being redirected through the neighborhood and speeding; (2) Dallin faculty and staff parking on side streets, which might cause neighborhood complaints if outreach has not been sufficient; (3) Traffic Supervisor is requested for the pilot, but the Town cannot hire enough people to staff the existing need; and (4) additional traffic enforcement is difficult given the current demands on APD.

Thad Dingman responded: (1) an increase in neighborhood-street parking for faculty and staff is expected to be only five automobiles. Feedback during the pilot will inform if changes in parking accommodations need to be made. (2) regarding the request for an additional Traffic Supervisor, the Arrival and Dismissal Plan is not contingent on it, but it would be better.

Laura Swan added that Officer White agreed to be around more during the start of the pilot. Once people understand how the new traffic pattern works, new habits will develop.

The Motion to endorse the Dallin Elementary School Arrival and Dismissal Pilot Plan as it is summarized in the Memorandum of January 14, 2022, to the Select Board for the pilot to start in February was unanimously approved.

## **6. Park Avenue Corridor.**

### **A. Update: Signal at Appleton St.**

Wayne Chouinard updated that DPW is interviewing five traffic engineer consultants for Mass Ave and Appleton St project. He is looking to add the study for the Park Ave and Appleton St traffic light to the scope of the engagement.

### **B. Discussion: Park Ave Pedestrian Improvements.**

Wayne Chouinard summarized that DPW has been considering pedestrian safety improvements to Park Ave at the complicated intersection of Wollaston Ave and Paul Revere Rd. Draft concepts of geometric changes have been drawn to shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians by adding curb extensions/bump outs. This will narrow the roadway, thereby slowing motor-vehicle speeds. Rather

than make improvements along the entire corridor, the Town would implement changes to this intersection and evaluate the outcome.

MWRA will be doing work along the Park Ave corridor in the next 2 – 6 years from Downing Square to the 5-way intersection of Park Ave and Wollaston Ave. Surface paving will follow MWRA work, and changes to the intersection should be completed beforehand.

Jeff Maxtutis inquired whether there are proposals to restriction turning movements. Petru Sofio added that limiting left onto westbound Paul Revere Rd could be problematic for neighborhood people going towards the Trader Joe's and Walgreens shopping area.

Laura Swan commented that bump outs help to slow vehicles. She inquired whether bike lanes would be added near the Park Ave and Mass Ave traffic signal. Wayne Chouinard responded that bike lanes will be added if there is room; if not, sharrows could be added.

### **C. Update: MBTA Bus Stops.**

Dan Amstutz updated TAC on the MBTA-proposed changes to bus stops along Park Ave and Wachusett Ave as part of the MBTA Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI) Program. Goals of PATI Program include improving bus stop accessibility and improving service.

Survey data were obtained, and it is being analyzed. Pro-transit groups have not been supportive of the MBTA's proposed changes: too many bus stops are proposed for elimination, and the changes do not consider the area topography. DPCD is not comfortable in bringing the MBTA proposal to the Select Board for approval given comments from public meeting. There will be further discussion with MBTA.

### **7. Discussion: Newland Rd/Summer St Crosswalk**

Ray Jones summarized a draft Memo to TAC regarding residents' request for a crosswalk across Summer St near Peirce Elementary School. Many people were observed crossing Summer St at Sunset Rd and Summer St at Newland Rd; the rate of crossings exceeded the warrant for adding a marked crosswalk. The sight distance to the proposed crosswalk location at Sunset St exceeded the MassDOT guideline.

The Memo recommends the installation of a marked crosswalk on the west side of Sunset Rd with appropriate signage such as advance warning signs. Also consider establishing a School Zone at this area and add a Traffic Supervisor to assist with crossing Summer St at Sunset Rd.

Jeff Maxtutis and Dan Amstutz noted good data collection and summary. Dan Amstutz requested a change in orientation of the pedestrian-counts diagram to be consistent with the other map displayed.

Wayne Chouinard and Corey Rateau commented that they want to promote the safest location to cross Summer St, which they believe is the signalized intersection at Park Ave Ext. Corey Rateau clarified that Summer St will not meet the school zone requirement as there is no direct access to school grounds from Summer St.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.